

BOROUGH OF WILKINSBURG COUNCIL MEETING
Planning Session
July 6, 2011

CALL TO ORDER

President Moore called the meeting to order at approximately 7:06 PM in Council Chambers, second floor of the Municipal Building, 605 Ross Ave., Wilkinsburg, PA.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called to establish a quorum. Present were: Ms. Evans, Ms. Trice, Mr. Cohn, Mr. Lewis, Ms. Macklin and President Moore. Also present were Marla P. Marcinko, Borough Manager and Matt Racunas, Esquire from the Law Offices of Patricia McGrail, L.L.C. Borough Solicitor. Absent were Mr. Lefebvre, Ms. Ervin, Ms. McCarthy-Johnson, and Mayor John Thompson. A quorum was established.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

A moment of silence was observed to honor all service men and women and in remembrance of all victims of violent crime.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Brenda Smith, Executive Director – NMRWA
Permeable Paving Demonstration Project

Ms. Smith explained that NMRWA (Nine Mile Run Watershed Association) is looking at alternatives to concrete sidewalk installation to help to preserve the larger mature trees in areas where large tree roots have been heaving the sidewalks. Pruning the roots when replacing the sidewalk can cause damage to the tree and create a hazard causing loss of the tree long before the end of a tree's lifespan. There is a new alternative called Flexi-Pave that has been tried in Edgewood. NMRWA would like to do a pilot demonstration project with a large mature tree at the corner of South Trenton Avenue and 317 S. Biddle Avenue with the homeowner having agreed. Borough Code requires all sidewalk construction to be of concrete. Ms. Smith requested a variance from that code requirement to begin this project and to demonstrate the new material. She further requested that Council consider modifying the ordinance after seeing the results of this project. Ms. Smith introduced Justin Bryan, the contractor that would perform the installation of the permeable pavement.

Ms. Macklin commented that Council had considered this permeable material several years ago and suggested that the Borough Engineer review this proposal and advise as to

its suitability. Mr. Cohn commented that the engineer had previously recommended this type of application for similar conditions in other locations in the Borough.

Justin Bryan commented on the material composition and application. President Moore inquired of Ms. Macklin if the samples shown were the same material as was considered previously. Ms. Macklin acknowledged that the material was not the same. In response to a question from Ms. Macklin, Mr. Bryan advised that the permeable pavement is slightly more expensive than concrete.

Ms. McCarthy-Johnson arrived at 7:19 PM.

Ms. Smith commented that this type of surface may discourage heaving as roots do not need to grow in search of water. Mr. Cohn inquired as to other types of applications for this surface. President Moore questioned how homeowners would pay for the application. Ms. Smith advised that this project will expend the balance of the grant funds available for the pilot. She commented that NMRWA would like to seek additional funding to subsidize future installations. In response to an inquiry from Ms. Macklin, Ms. Smith advised that this surface is less slippery than concrete surfaces with snowfall since the snow melts through the permeable surface and does not freeze. Ms. Trice questioned the locations where the surface has been used in New York State. Mr. Bryan advised that it was being mostly used in the Syracuse area near universities, parking lots, and walking trails. Ms. McCarthy-Johnson questioned how a de-icing agent affects the surface. Mr. Bryan explained that initially there may be discoloration but once the agent dissipates, the discoloration goes away.

Justin Hynicka – NMRWA
Progress Report on TreeVitalize Project

Mr. Hynicka provided an update on the project and reported that ninety-three (93) trees had been planted to date along Douglass Drive, Andrews Drive and around Dumlplin Hall. They will be continuing with site selection this summer and targeting the business district and performing outreach. Mr. Hynicka offered to accompany Council members through their wards for suggested locations for plantings. President Moore commented that she attended the Tree Tender Course. Mr. Hynicka informed Council of upcoming tree care days this summer. Ms. Macklin questioned the possibility for plantings at the proposed Ardmore Boulevard Greenway revitalization project. Ms. Macklin will discuss this with Mr. Hynicka. Ms. Smith commented that location priority is given to sites with no utility lines.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Wilbert Wright – 1315 Clark St. – Commented on the usefulness of the Allegheny County Senior Resource Guide. He announced that the rent rebate program has been extended to December 31, 2011 for those with disabilities or senior citizens. He

commented that assistance in completing the application can be obtained by calling 412-247-1446 - Eastern Area Adult Services 901 West Street.

Mr. Cohn questioned if the program is for all of Allegheny County. Ms. Evans clarified that the program is State-wide for those with disabilities and senior citizens, is income-based and payment of real estate taxes must be current.

David Wilson – Eastern Area Pre-Hospital Services – Mr. Wilson reported a total of 308 calls with a response time of 6.9 minutes. The response times for the most life-threatening calls were 6.1 minutes. President Moore questioned whether there had been improvement on the response times. Mr. Wilson advised that the response times are in line with historical data. Ms. Macklin questioned if EAPS had moved in to their new facilities at the Park Avenue garage. Ms. Marcinko advised that the keys have been made, the lease has been signed and Eastern Area Pre-Hospital Services can move in.

Kate Luxemburg 432 Rebecca Ave. – Announced that the Sheriff's Sale scheduled for July has been postponed. Ms. Marcinko clarified why the sale had been "postponed"/continued. She commented on the proposed street sign replacement project and that there is a Wilkinsburg resident who has a sign business. She reported that some progress has been made on the estate administration process and suggested that Ms. Macklin may want to speak about that later in the meeting.

Shirley Doubt 1726 Wright St. – Ms. Doubt presented pictures to illustrate a water problem on her property which she contends is coming from an unnamed alley to the rear of her property. Ms. Moore questioned the Solicitor as to next steps. Mr. Racunas suggested that she contact her insurance carrier. Mr. Racunas informed her that by filing a claim she would pay the deductible and there would at least be an investigation with the insurance company paying for the repairs. Ms. Marcinko commented that the Engineer had inspected the property and attributed the problem to a possible shifting of the hillside which cannot be remedied. It was further determined the property is not owned by the Borough but equally owned by the abutting properties. Mr. Racunas advised that he is responsible for advising Council. Mr. Cohn suggested that it would be most appropriate for Ms. Doubt to handle the matter through her insurance company.

John Ward – 1221 Swissvale Ave. – His concern is regarding the intersection of Hill Avenue and Swissvale Ave. Ms. Evans commented that a resolution of this matter is needed and perhaps a comprehensive traffic circulation study. Ms. Evans suggested talking to other communities/groups as to how this could be accomplished. Ms. Marcinko advised that she spoke with the Borough Engineer regarding another traffic study to determine whether a signal was warranted at that location and it was his opinion that PA DOT would most likely not perform a second review. Mr. Cohn questioned whether there were any short-term solutions. Ms. Trice questioned whether prohibiting commercial vehicle traffic would be helpful. Ms. Macklin suggested having the Public Safety Committee to review the issue.

Linda Law –Wood Street – Announced the upcoming home buying workshop and announced Community Day scheduled for July 30, 2011.

Wilbert Wright 1315 Clark St. – Questioned if an evaluation of the direction that traffic signals are facing (i.e. Ross Street) can be included in the traffic circulation study.

REPORT FROM COUNCIL PRESIDENT

President Moore thanked Ms. Doubt-Elston for helping with Hard Head Patrol and provided the locations for the fittings. She also thanked Jack Ward for posting signs for Community Day. She further commented on how good the community is looking, particularly Ward One and commended DPW on doing a good job. Finally, Ms. Moore wished everyone a healthy and safe summer.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

Capital Planning Committee – Ms. Macklin reported:

- There was no meeting in the month of June. The next meeting will be in July.
- The proposed bond issue was discussed by the Finance Committee and she will be providing them a general plan for capital improvements at the next meeting.
- The decision as to whether to issue debt for a 15 or 20 year period will need to be decided. The 20 year issue will result in lower annual debt service payments but for a longer period of time.
- The equipment list for DPW is being finalized.

Finance Committee – Mr. Cohn reported:

- The next meeting will be on July 21, 2011 at 9:30 AM in the Borough Manager's Conference Room.
- He commented on a preliminary meeting with other communities regarding extending bike paths from the City into Wilkinsburg and other urban communities. Ms. Macklin suggested that the Planning Commission be involved in this planning process.
- Ms. Macklin mentioned that several Council members toured the Eastridge library branch and discussed possibilities for a community center at that location.

Personnel Committee – Ms. Trice reported:

The Committee met on June 8, 2011. The Committee met with Chief Coleman regarding her employment agreement, heard three grievances and discussed the vacancies in the Finance Department and Police Department. Out of eleven applicants for the Finance Clerk I position, six applicants were residents. Four of the six applicants were interviewed. There was a total of twenty six applicants for the Police Department Records Clerk position. Fifteen applicants were residents.

Ms. Marcinko provided an update on the status of all hirings.

The next meeting will be held July 19, 2011 6:00 PM. The meeting is a closed meeting.

Mr. Lewis provided a report from the WPJWA:

- The Authority is refinancing its bond issue.
- A number of water line breaks have occurred over past several days.
- The process for the installation of the MIU's continues and there has been no termination of service to date for failure to respond to requests to schedule the installations. The installation of these units will allow for monthly billing.
- Customers now have ability to pay bills by credit card on line.

President Moore commented on the nice job on the re-paving on Swissvale Avenue and James Street.

President Moore announced the Amen Corner event honoring local firefighters and emergency responders will take place on Friday, July 22, 2011 from 6:00 – 10:00 p.m. at Cemetery Lane in Ross Township. Tickets are \$25.00.

Ms. Evans reported on the status of the façade improvement project funded by a grant from DCED. The deadline was extended to June 30, 2013. There are a number of applications pending which she believes is a good sign. Ms. Evans advised that a proposal will be submitted to the Finance Committee requesting that the balance of funds remaining in the Revolving Loan Fund be reallocated for use for a façade improvement program outside the designated boundaries of the central business district. Mr. Cohn questioned whether the auditors recommended disbursement of that money for that purpose. Ms. Marcinko commented that attempts were made to determine the origin of the original funding for that program in response to the auditor's request in order to determine if façade improvements would be an acceptable use of the funds. Ms. Macklin commented that she recalled EDGE providing loans and not subsidies. She commented on having served on the EDGE Committee. Mr. Cohn commented that, provided the auditors agree, it would be a good thing to get the monies out into the community.

Parks & Recreation Committee – Ms. McCarthy-Johnson

- Announced Community Day is scheduled for July 30, 2011 from 12:00 to 9:00 PM.

REPORT FROM BOROUGH MANAGER

Ms. Marcinko commented that she will be seeking Council's direction with respect to the variance for the permeable paving project proposed by Nine Mile Run Watershed Association under New Business.

OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Macklin informed Council of the Redevelopment Authority of Wilkinsburg's intention to submit an application for CITF funds for the estate administration program.

She advised that the Authority would not be competing for such funding with the Borough or WCDC and that the funding would be used to begin estate administration for estates with no heirs. This is a new tool which is available to municipalities to address blighted properties with the enactment of State legislation. Ms. Macklin requested the support of Borough Council to move ahead with the grant application. Ms. Macklin will provide a summary of the grant application to all Council members. The Redevelopment Authority is proposing a pilot program which may lead to a model for other PA communities. The Authority will not take ownership of any property and will not be acquiring properties through eminent domain. The Redevelopment Authority has met with County representatives. Ms. Evans requested to review a copy of the entire grant application. There was a discussion whether a formal resolution of Council was required in order to apply for the funding. Ms. Macklin emphasized the need for a letter of support from the Borough.

Ms. Macklin questioned the status of police hiring. Ms. Marcinko advised that we are still waiting on the results of the background investigations. Ms. Macklin expressed concern regarding staffing levels in the Police Department and stated that she is increasingly concerned given the recent shooting in her neighborhood. Ms. Macklin commented that it had been agreed that two full-time officers would be hired, one of those funded through the COPS grant, as well as part-time officers. Ms. Marcinko expressed her frustration with this stall in the process and stated that she will continue to push to get everything finalized.

Ms. Macklin questioned whether the part-time Finance Clerk I had been hired. Ms. Marcinko advised that the results of the physical examination and drug and alcohol screen were just received on this date.

A motion was made by Ms. Trice, second by Mr. Lewis, to hire the recommended part-time Finance Clerk I at a rate of pay of \$10.00 per hour for no more than thirty hours per week.

Yes: Mr. Cohn, Mr. Lewis, Ms. McCarthy-Johnson, Ms. Macklin, Ms. Evans, Ms. Trice,
President Moore

Motion carried

Ms. Macklin questioned status of hiring of the Police Department Records Clerk. Ms. Marcinko advised that the applications are being reviewed by Chief Coleman for a recommendation on candidates to interview. Ms. Macklin questioned the status of the hiring of the DPW Driver. Ms. Marcinko advised that the application period closes July 8, 2011.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Marcinko requested Council's direction with regard to the request of NMRWA for a waiver from the requirements of the sidewalk ordinance.

A motion was made by Ms. Evans, second by Mr. Cohn, to approve a waiver of the provision in the sidewalk ordinance that requires installation of concrete as the sole material and to accept an alternative material as proposed by Nine Mile Run Watershed Association for their pilot project on Biddle Avenue subject to the review and approval of the Borough Engineer.

Moved: Ms. Evans

Second by: Mr. Cohn

Yes: Ms. Evans, Ms. Trice, Mr. Cohn, Mr. Lewis, Ms. McCarthy-Johnson, Ms. Macklin,
President Moore

Motion carried

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, on motion by Ms. McCarthy-Johnson, second by Mr. Lewis, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:15 PM.

Eugenia Moore, Council President